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TAGS: [OSCE](#) [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [MS](#) [RS](#) [UP](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIAN MFA DEMARCHED ON TRANSNISTRIA MAY PROTOCOLS

REF: STATE 90492

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs Kirk Augustine.
Reasons: 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) With Ambassador-at-Large Nesterushkin on vacation until the end of the week, poloff delivered reftel demarche June 7 to Mikhail Yalkin, Moldova Section Chief, MFA Second CIS Department. Yalkin said that there was no change whatsoever in Russian policy or approach to Transnistria. He characterized the protocol issued following the May 23 meeting between Deputy PM Zhukov and Transnistrian "president" Smirnov as simply a summary of the discussion they had had. Despite the fact that some in the media had portrayed the protocol as a new agreement or understanding, Yalkin insisted it was nothing of the kind. He resisted even calling the protocol a "plan of action," emphasizing that Moscow remains guided by the 1997 Moscow Memorandum as the basis for its dealings with Transnistria. Nevertheless, Yalkin added that practical cooperation had to and would continue to exist between Russia and Russian citizens, first and foremost, in Transnistria.

¶2. (C) Regarding the draft "Protocol on Transit" that Nesterushkin distributed in Brussels May 24, Yalkin said it was merely the latest iteration of a draft protocol Russia put forward at the April 19 "three-plus-two" meeting in Moscow. He claimed all partners had been invited to comment on the draft. The May 24 version incorporated those suggestions, including those, Yalkin said, from OSCE Ambassador Hill. He added that Nesterushkin and Hill had discussed the draft. Moscow had no intention of moving the draft forward, Yalkin continued, unless all sides agreed to it, since the parties all had a stake in it. He was vague about when further comments were expected and emphasized that the idea of a transit protocol was fully in line with the Moscow Memorandum.

¶3. (C) Yalkin offered numerous complaints about Chisinau's approach to a settlement. He said Moldova should focus on building social links with Transnistria, such as exist in the realms of sports and religion, instead of expecting intractable political questions to be solved first. He warned that Chisinau was getting close to alienating the next generation in Transnistria, upon whom the responsibility for a final settlement will lie; he thought Chisinau was losing a real opportunity by refusing to talk with new Transnistrian parliament speaker (and Russian citizen) Shevchuk. He complained that many businesses had registered with Moldovan authorities, but Chisinau's new licensing requirements were making it more difficult for companies to comply. He added that Moscow found "weak" Chisinau's justification that it was implementing WTO standards.

¶4. (C) Yalkin said Moscow had no influence on a possible early-fall independence referendum. He called the possibility more "psychological" than practical, and asserted the outcome of the vote was no foregone conclusion.

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